

THE BRITISH WORKWOMAN OUT AND AT HOME.

"A Woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.—Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her."—Prov. xxxi.

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY

IHS

CHARITY



REMINISCENCES OF THE WORKROOM.

BY AN OVERLOOKER.

No. I.—MATTY MORRIS.

WHAT is your opinion of an overlooker? Perhaps you suppose she is a being who can do nothing but find fault, and stamp out and otherwise tease girls, and who cares for nothing but getting as much work out of them as possible. This is not a very just estimate. There are a few overlookers who care for the comfort and well-being of the young people, and then, who are glad to be their friend, and do not mind inconveniencing themselves to benefit them. Will you remember this fact, while reading this series of true stories? Do not imagine that I have wished to pry rudely into the affairs of the young persons whose histories I shall give you, nor believe that I have any other motive for revealing them, than to be fit the readers of the *BRITISH WORKWOMAN*.

Our girls had determined to have a merry Christmas. They had each subscribed sixpence a week, for two months, towards the expenses. They had borrowed a room of the master, and had given Maria Smith half-a-crown for her trouble. She was to cook the goose and boil the pudding, and provide the knives, forks, and spoons, for that money, and was to hire the eight number of glasses and dishes, &c., and she was invited to spend the evening with them. So was I. What a blaze of light it was! Coming in at first from the dim streets, it almost blinded me! I could see nothing but spangles, sparkles, and glitters. A second or two more, and the brilliant tea equipage caught my attention—but only for an instant; the next, and I was amazed at the dazzling dresses about me. I scarcely knew some of the girls at first sight. I opened my eyes and gazed about me, and I felt a real glow at my heart as my little favourite Matty came up to me. She was all smiles and sunshine, and curls; and she was actually dressed in a white muslin on that 25th of December!

"My dear Matty, you will certainly take cold," I began. But she stopped me.

"Now, you dear old crosspatch, you scold me all the year, and I take it lighly, but to-night, for once, you mustn't do it. Isn't this room too warm to allow any one to take cold—and hasn't I a thick dress in the next, to put on when I go home?"

How lovely she looked with her rosy, pouting lips, and bright blue eyes, and golden curls. I half sighed as I looked at her. It seemed so pleasant to be pretty and young.

Matty introduced me to some of her numerous friends, and I saw for the first time that evening the company which our work-girls generally keep.

It is, I think, the best thing that can happen to a girl, when she gets honourably engaged to an honest and a worthy young man; I do not now refer to a girl of fifteen, who does not yet know her own mind; but to those of more mature age. It is far, far better to settle down to one, though the engagement must necessarily be a long one—the young couple having to wait—than to walk out first with one and then another. So it was with feelings of pleasure that I was introduced to the sweethearts that night.

"Well, Matty, and where is your particular friend?" I asked.

"Ah, where!" she said, laughing.

"Is he not among these?"

"Oh, dear no. I shall be very particular about the man I speak to; I couldn't settle down as some of the girls have."

I looked at Matty, with nothing to recommend her but her beauty and winning simplicity; and said, "I hope you will get a good man."

"I hope so, too," she replied, merrily, "for I am bad enough myself."

The evening wore away pleasantly, with many kinds of amusement; but about eight o'clock most of us were astonished by a new arrival.

Mr. Henry, son of a gentleman residing in the neighbourhood, came in; he was staying at home, looking out for any amusement he could find, to while away the long college vacation.

"Have you a chair to spare?" he asked pleasantly. And I am bound to confess that most of the girls took delight to see him. There was a little flutter of excitement, and Mr. Henry sat down as if he were one of us; and the fun went on as usual. For myself, I wondered what business he had there; but he comported himself so satisfactorily, seeming not to forget he was a gentleman, even while doing his utmost to promote the enjoyment of the evening, that after a time I forgave his intrusion. Seven times I noticed that he spoke to Matty, and her eyes sparkled, and the colour came to her cheek. Then he would

turn and address some other of the girls, with some word of pleasant flattery; and, altogether, he had more of popularity that evening than was his share. It was growing late before any one but myself thought of going home. Eleven had been the hour at which I was to leave; but a new determination seized me now: I would stay until Mr. Henry left, or see Matty home myself. He did not go, however, until the party broke up; and then wishing us all good night cordially, we saw him enter the gates of his father's house. Several of the girls went Matty's way, and I did not leave her until she had reached her father's door.

The next morning there was a great outcry. Matty had not been home. Her father and mother had gone to bed, leaving the key where she could find it; but it did not appear to have been touched.

Her mother came early to me; I threw off the doubts on my own mind as lightly as possible—she had changed her mind after we left her, and gone to sleep with one of the girls; they were very tired, and were sleeping late into the morning. Matty would return presently. But still there was a dread upon my heart, which I could scarcely account for; and, in its recesses, I believed that Mr. Henry had something to do with her disappearance. While, however, I was doubting, he rode by with his father, fresh and bright, and cool; evidently he had been home, and slept, and breakfasted as usual.

But the long day wore away, and we could not find Matty. We sent inquiries everywhere for her. Her father went to some relatives in the country, hoping that she might have gone there; but they had not seen her. Every friend, every acquaintance was visited, but none knew anything of Matty. We were perplexed, and distressed beyond description.

I thought it right to tell the master. Mr. Henry was in the room when I was announced. He was a frequent visitor at the master's. He was courteous and genial enough, as ever.

"I think it right for you to know, Sir, that one of our girls is missing; her friends are very anxious. We have searched everywhere and made inquiries, but can learn nothing about her."

"Indeed! who is it?"
"Matty Morris." I looked at Mr. Henry as I pronounced the name; he was slightly agitated. "Matty!" he exclaimed—"why that is pretty girl with blue eyes—isn't it? When was she missed?"

I told them all I knew, and they both seemed surprised, though Mr. Wright was inclined to treat the matter lightly.

Mr. Henry, however, suggested that if she did not return in twenty-four hours from that time, some further steps should be taken.

Well, we did all we could think of. Mr. Henry himself spoke to the police. I inserted advertisements in the papers, begging her to come back, or at least to let us know where she was; but though we waited and watched, no tidings reached us of the absent one; and the weary weeks rolled away, and somewhat soothed our minds, though they could never make us forget. Even Matty's mother and father grew partially tranquil, and the distracted anxiety changed to a dull kind of hope that she would some day return.

About six months after—it had been a sultry July day, and was a still, oppressive evening; and I was lying on my sofa, quite wearied with the day's work. The clock striking eleven aroused me, and I was going to rise, when a tap at the door attracted my attention. Greatly wondering who was my visitor so late, I opened the door, and Matty Morris stood before me, but so pale, so worn, so ill, that I scarcely recognised her at first.

"Oh, Matty, Matty, where have you been?" I cried as I brought her in. "You have nearly broken our hearts, Matty."

Poor child! she wept as if her own would break, until I took her into my arms and soothed her with my caresses. Then she sobbed out her sad tale. After all it was Mr. Henry who was at the bottom of it. She had been with him many a time before that eventful Christmas evening, and he had flattered her vanity, and made her presents, and taken her out, though none of us knew of it.

For Matty! she had lost all her glad consciousness of innocence. Never more could she lift up her head among her fellows. Henceforth she deserved to be scorned. Six months she had been living under the protection of her seducer; for more than six months she had turned her back upon virtue, and gone forward in the way of sin. She had forsaken the roof of her father, had given up the means of honestly earning her living, and had yielded to the voice of the charmer. She had sown the

wind, and would reap the whirlwind. No tears could wash out the remembrance of her sin. Poor Matty! she had deeply fallen, and yet she had seemed so good; and Mr. Henry had seemed the kindest and most honourable of men.

"He is a deceitful villain," I muttered.

"Oh no," she said, in a voice full of pain; "he never has deceived me. Every one of his promises has been faithfully kept. But I loved him so that I could do anything for him. That night when you left me, I knew he would come and speak to me, but I did not dream of what was to follow. He had prepared comfortable rooms for me, and I went to them: I must have been mad to go; and yet he has treated me very kindly ever since. But I have grown tired of it—an' her tears flowed faster. "I can't live longer without seeing mother. I have pined for her so that it has made me ill. Will she forgive me?"

I took her to the old people, and they wept over their returned prodigal. The father was a little stern at first, when he learnt the truth. But the mother—mother like—was glad to have her back again.

And now the punishment began. The master, kind and upright in his dealings, was always particular about the character of the girls. He ordered Mr. Henry to leave his house, and never enter it again. All friendship between them was to cease for ever. And he was scarcely less lenient with Matty. He would not employ her again. She asked him, but he said sternly, "It is right that those who sin should also suffer." This brought great trouble both to Matty and her parents; their livelihood depended in great part upon her earnings; and now they were stopped, absolutely wanting money in the face. And Matty could find no friends to help her now. Her old companions turned from her. She was the very children who knew her reviled her. She never went out of doors without having her sin flung at her; and all the dreary day the memory of it haunted her. Every virtuous girl, every pure-minded man, although they might pity her, shrank from her companionship; she was left to weep alone.

We scarcely knew what to do with her. A friend waited on Mr. Henry and his father, and tried to persuade him to marry her. But that was out of the question; and it had been willing, Matty was not. The short-lived passion had died away, and she shrank from him in disgust. They took her away to a little quiet country place where no one knew her—to sorrow and to die.

Poor Matty! all the youth crushed out of her, all the brightness turned into sorrow. She might have lived a glad young life full of joy, had she possessed any strength of character, any fear of God. Moreover she might have been saved, if she had refused to listen to one request. "Mother, I should have been your dutiful and happy child now, if I had not concealed everything from you at first. But he insisted that I should wait awhile."

And, dear young readers of the *"BRITISH WORKWOMAN"*, distrust every man who wishes you to hide anything from your mother. If he be honourable, he will speak out honestly to your parents, and allow you to do the same. And God preserve you all from poor Matty's fate.

PROPER CORRECTION OF CHILDREN.—The mother of a little girl, who was always delicate, and subject to fits on any excitement, was told by her physician to keep her in a strict confinement, and not to let her be exposed. But, instead of producing the desired effect, this course made her more peevish, irritable, and stubborn. After making it a subject of earnest prayer, the mother decided to govern her as she did the other children. Taking the little one upon her knee, she told her of the error of the course she had pursued, and that henceforth she must obey or be punished. Presently some duty was required, but the child paid no heed to it. Punishment followed, but still the little will held out. It was repeated, with no better success. Again was the trial made, the mother's heart crying to God for strength and guidance. At last, the little offender was completely subdued, and became a most obedient, loving child. One morning, the mother walked together with the canary. "O, my poor boy for me! I am such a bad sinner!" It was not long before she gave evidence that she was indeed "born again." That mother lived to hear her say, with pallid lips, "I thank you, mother, for punishing me that day. If you had not, I should have died in my sins, and gone to hell; but now I feel that my sins are forgiven, and I am going to Jesus." Mothers, will you not heed the lesson? Never punish a child, when you cannot pray at the same time for God to bless the chastisement. A punishment given in anger will do more harm than good. Submission to parental authority is a preparative for submission to God's will: while continual self-indulgence fosters the evil passions of the heart, and strengthens its natural enmity to God.

"MAN'S EXTREMITY IS GOD'S OPPORTUNITY;"
or,
THE UNHAPPY CHRISTMAS AND ITS RESULTS.

A TEMPERANCE TALE. BY A. E. H.

PART I.

"Have you got any money for me, Bill?" the children are so hungry," said a poor woman, half timidly, half apologetically to her husband, who had just come in from his work in a carpenter's shop.

Flinging his hat on the floor, he seated himself sullenly on the only chair in the room, and resting both hands upon his knees, gazed absently into the fire-place, apparently unconscious that the grate was empty, or that anyone occupied the room but himself.

On his wife anxiously repeating the question, he turned round, with a half derisive laugh.

"Money, lass? Oh! ay, plenty of money; see if there is not money?" he said bitterly, turning his pockets inside out: they were as usual empty, with the exception of a scrap of tobacco rolled up in a dirty piece of paper, a pawn ticket, an old knife and a short pipe.

He was evidently intoxicated, and his poor wife, not daring to press him further, turned away to hide her tears.

Two frightened, little girls, of three and five years of age were cowering in a corner, having already learned but too well the bitter lesson of fear, which their father's occasional bursts of unceasing passion had taught them. The only lesson, alas! which the poor little creatures had as yet ever received at his hands.

Since morning their mother had not been able to procure food either for herself or the little ones; for the last few hours she had quieted their clamours for bread, by telling them that when father came home she would get them some supper. He had promised before he went out in the morning, that he would bring home his wages to make them all comfortable that Christmas Eve, and his poor wife believed him.

Yes, notwithstanding all his broken promises, and harsh treatment of herself and the children, she would not allow herself to believe, that the warm-hearted, generous William Scarsdale, whom she had loved and trusted, and who had well deserved her affection at the time of their marriage, could find in his heart now to leave her and his little ones to starve, rather than deny himself a few hours of what he called "pleasure" at the "Grey Stag."

But so it was, drink had done for him what it has done for so many; deadened every good feeling in his nature, perverted his taste, and rendered his own life miserable, as well as the lives of all belonging to him.

Mary could have borne it for herself, but she could not bear to hear the constant wailings of her children. Their cries for bread were now constantly ringing in her ears, and what could she do?

Nearly every article of furniture had already been sold, piece by piece, to supply their daily wants. A rickety table, one chair, and a couple of stools, were all that now remained of the neat and comfortable furniture of two rooms, which they had at first rented. A bag of straw and an old blanket had taken the place of a good bedstead, and as the poor heart-broken wife looked round to see if anything remained that she could pawn or sell for a few pennworth of bread, her eyes fell upon the weeping children, trying to smother their sobs, and her whole spirit rose against the injustice, the cruelty of the man, who set there seemingly so indifferent to all the suffering he had brought upon them.

Forgetting the imprudence of irritating him in his present mood, forgetting everything but the wild spirit of despair that prompted her words, she accused him bitterly of his broken bread, his gross waste of time and money, earning as he did twenty-three shillings a week; and ended by saying passionately, that he might as well kill them all at once, as leave them to starve by inches, and then he could enjoy himself at the "Grey Stag" without fear of interruption.

Mary's bitter words, the real meaning of which she was too excited to consider, went deeper than she thought. Her husband's conscience pricked him sorely. He knew well enough that it was all true, but he was too proud, or, as his companions would have said, "too high spirited" to admit the fact, and angry at the very misery he himself had caused, he picked up his hat, staggered to his feet, pushed the chair away violently, making it fall with a crash upon the floor, and, with muttered curses upon his family, he made his way towards the door.

His poor wife, frightened at his manner, laid hold of his arm, intending to try and induce him to stay. He shook her off savagely. "None of that, woman! leave go, lass! say; since you don't like my doings, you may do for yourself, belike its the last you'll see of me," and with a fearful oath, he flung out of the house and banged the door after him.

For a few moments Mary stood trembling on the spot where he had left her, too confused and alarmed to think what she ought to do.

The little girls, who had crept out of their corner as soon as the door closed up on their father, roused her by clinging to her skirts and begging to know if father would bring them some supper.

Lifting the youngies in her arms, she sat down, and pressing the child to her breast, cried bitterly over it; then standing up, she said, "Come, Jane, perhaps Mrs. Brown may give us a bit of bread."

Drying her eyes, and trying to look more cheerful, she carried the little Alice to a neighbour's house, followed closely by Jane.

Mrs. Brown herself opened the door. "Why, Mary! whatever has happened?" said she, adding kindly, "come in, woman, come in;" and shutting the door, she brought them upstairs to the rooms she and her husband occupied.

Hearing a man's voice in the room, Mary shrank back timidly. "Won't excuse my going in, Mrs. Brown; I'm sure Mr. Brown must be home from his work, and I only came to ask if you could spare me a bit of bread for the children. I've nothing in the house and no means to buy it, or I wouldn't trouble you;" and her voice faltered.

Mrs. Brown was a kind-hearted, motherly woman; her quick ear caught the tone of agitation. She knew the trials her poor neighbour had to endure, and answered readily, "Very well, Mary, my young ones are at supper, Jane and Alice can share with them, you and I will have a cup of tea in our bed-room."

She was as good as her word, and Mary's tears flowed fast as her friend pressed her to eat some bread and butter before she told her what was the matter; then, gently and gradually, Mrs. Brown drew from her the sad tale of the day's suffering, the horrible fear that possessed her, lest in his frenzy her husband should lay violent hands on himself or someone else, in revenge for her hard words.

"I never thought it would have come to this," said the weeping wife, "or I wouldn't have said a word to him; but, oh! Mrs. Brown, I did it for the children's sake. I felt as if it maddened me to listen to the poor little things asking for bread, bread, only a little bit of bread, mother; and I had none to give them. And then to-night—he had promised so faithfully that we should all have a nice dinner tomorrow, and that he would stay in and share it. He said just before he went out in the morning, that he would give me the whole of his wages this time, and ended with 'Never fear, lass,' and one of his old kind smiles; and then to see him in that state and without a farthing. God knows it was hard to bear. She covered her face with her hands, and rocked herself backwards and forwards in the extremity of her trouble.

"Surely it was hard, Mary," said Mrs. Brown, soothingly, "but you say, 'God knows.' Did you tell Him about it? no one can help like the way He can."

"I didn't think of that," said the weeping woman, in a low tone, "but doesn't He know? Whether I tell Him, or don't tell Him, isn't it all one?"

Mrs. Brown—"Yes, He knows; but you cannot look for His help without you ask for it."

Mary—"Everything has gone wrong with me of late; it didn't seem any use to say prayers of an evening. I was too miserable; oh! you don't know," she added, with a convulsive sob, "he hasn't come home sober to me once for the last three months; only he'd spent all his money, I wouldn't have seen him to-night till after twelve o'clock. What with the sitting up, and the anxiety, the children only half fed, and no place dirty for want of the means to clean it; I could have killed myself, only for looking at the little ones, and thinking what would happen to them, if I was gone."

"Hush, hush, Mary," said Mrs. Brown, gently, "there was more than that in it. Sure enough the poor little things would be badly off in this cold world without their mother; but you're not the one to kill yourself body and soul, and make sure of never seeing your own darlings again, either on earth or in heaven. The blessed Lord above saw your trouble, and He helped you in pity, and drove away the wicked thought. Won't you go to Him now? do,

dear, it'll give you comfort. I've tried it myself, and I know it will. He always knows what is best for us."

"Many's the time you've been kind to me, Mrs. Brown," said Mary, getting up, "and I'll take your advice. I'll go home with the children and pray to Him, and the young ones shall learn to pray too; the more shame for me, that it's the first time I ever thought of teaching them. God bless you, you deserve to be happy."

"God will bless you for that last thought about the children, Mary," said Mrs. Brown, as she left the room to call them.

The little creatures came back quite happy. They had been well warmed and fed, for the kind-hearted John Brown could not bear to see the children of his old friend looking so pinched and miserable.

His wages were the same as those of Scarsdale, yet, as he avoided all intemperance, he had quite enough to make his own family comfortable, and to lend a helping hand to a neighbour sometimes, as well.

"Good night, and God bless you, Mary," he said cordially, as, through the open door he saw her passing down the stairs, with the little Alice in her arms.

"Good night, and don't forget," said Ellen Brown, as she closed the door behind them, and ran back to her own bright fireside.

Poor Mary walked quickly back to her wretched home. Shutting the door and lighting a fainting candle, she knelt down, and made the children kneel beside her, clasping their little hands together; and while they listened in wonder, she humbly told the Lord how very unhappy she was, and begged of Him for Jesus' sake to hear and help her and to keep her husband from harm.

It was a short prayer, broken by sobs, but it came from her own heart, and surely the Lord heard it. Getting up off her knees, she was going to put the children to sleep, on their wretched bed, when the light of the candle gleamed across something white upon the table. She took it up, and found it was a letter. She tore it open eagerly, and it proved to be a few lines from a lady, who had formerly known her in the country, and now wrote, desiring her to call at her house the following (Christmas) morning, as she had laid aside one or two little things, that she thought might be useful to her and the children.

Mary stood silent with the letter in her hand. "Sure enough He's heard me already," she murmured to herself. "Who would have thought it could have come so soon, though?" Then recollecting herself, she called the children to come to bed, and lying down beside them soon fell into a quiet sleep.

About half-past ten o'clock she was aroused by a peremptory knocking at the door; and a man's voice, which she thought she knew, demanded admittance. She had lain down in her usual clothes, and now hastily getting up she opened the door. Two policemen were standing outside.

"I'm sorry to disturb your rest, ma'am," said the foremost, "but we want William Scarsdale; is he within?" and he turned the light of his lantern full upon the miserable room and its occupants.

"He's not at home to-night, and I don't know where he's gone," said Mary, trembling all over; "but oh! Mr. Willis, what is it you want him for, what has he done?"

"I'm sorry to be obliged to tell you, Mrs. Scarsdale," said the man, kindly, "but the fact is, he has got himself into a drunken row at the 'Grey Stag'; a man has been high killed, and they say your husband has had the foremost hand in the doing of it." Mary covered her face with her apron, and sat down.

It seemed as if there was to be no end of it: blow followed blow so fast, that she was quite stunned.

The policeman who had spoken, and who knew her very well, good-naturedly lit her candle from his lantern, and said a few sympathizing words; but his duty did not admit of delay, and closing the door quietly after him, he and his comrade left the house, to prosecute their search in other directions.

An hour and a half after they were gone, Mary still sat there, trying to realize in her own mind this new form of misery. At last the candle flickered down into the socket, and went out, and she was obliged to grope her way to the bed and lie down again.

The tired children slept soundly, and had not wakened during the visit of the policemen; and, exhausted with all she had gone through, the weary mother fell once more into a troubled slumber.

(To be continued.)

The British Workwoman, OUT AND AT HOME.

FEBRUARY, 1865.

"I BELIEVE THAT ANY IMPROVEMENT WHICH COULD BE BROUGHT TO DEAR ON THE MOTHERS, WOULD EFFECT A GREATER AMOUNT OF GOOD THAN ANYTHING THAT HAS YET BEEN DONE."—*Earl Shaftesbury.*

D A Y S.

"ONLY A DAY." Are there not three hundred and sixty-five in a year; what can it matter if we lose one now and then?"

If we do not say this, we act as if we did—very often. We allow then to slip from our grasp, having accomplished very little in them; we let them die out without leaving any brilliance behind them.

Only a day! But we may have hated some one in it, may have spoken an unkind word, may have helped to crush some heart that was breaking. There may come a time when we would gladly undo that day's work. Only a day! But how much good may be done in its hours; a temptation resisted; a bad passion conquered, a foe relieved, a friend helped, seed sown that shall bring forth an abundant sheaf in the eternal harvest.

We arise in the morning, the day's duties calling us to labour; we take the hours as they come, in a sort of dull, dogged way; go through them, growing tired toward the close—and another day is over. We do not notice how rapidly they pass; but days and years are slipping from our eager hands, and the young are growing old almost before they know it.

Albeit, these reflections are of a serious character; they were suggested by the recollection of a merry day. It does not seem very long since many of the readers of the BRITISH WORKWOMAN were looking out for that eagerly expected morning—*St. Valentine.*

It came bringing the fanciful envelope, and the still more fanciful enclosure; and that day and several following ones were full of conjecture as to whose hand-writing it contained, and whether he really meant what was said. Merry enough was the laughter, as the letters were passed from hand to hand, some caricatures as ugly as can be imagined; some with a spice of sentiment, and a great deal of lace and flattery.

And, again, there will be sparkling eyes, and eager hands, and merry exclamations, as the postman's knock is sounding through the hall; again there will be clapping of hands, and blushings of faces, and trembling excitement. From the servant to the mistress, from the child to the woman, all have a laugh and a welcome for St. Valentine.

We wonder if our young friends have grown a year wiser, since they did the same thing last year. Perhaps many of them are a year happier; love, which they only ventured to exhibit itself in the valentine, may have been openly declared and reciprocated. We hope the past year has witnessed other progress than that of love. We trust that some measure of earthly prosperity has been granted; and, especially, that there has been some growth in goodness and virtue and purity and truth.

May we say a word to the mothers with reference to this day? It is an important one to you and to your daughters. Some foolish letters put into their hands on the 14th of February, may fill their young heads with nonsense, which you may find it difficult to eradicate. Try to keep the vanity which may be excited within a reasonable limit, laugh away any nervousness with which they may be disposed to regard the poetical propositions. O, mothers, teach your girls to look beyond Valentines and their attendant nonsensicals. At the same time it is

scarcely wise to ridicule them too strongly. It is natural to girls to like them, and if they find no sympathy whatever in their mothers, they are likely to seek other confidants. God help the mothers of England to be wise in little as well as in great things.

St. Valentine may well bring some mirth into our bright English homes. It is good that eyes should sparkle, and ringing laughter be heard—especially when it is innocent. But it may also suggest a few graver thoughts on the flight of time.

Dear young readers, what good use are you making of the days? Are you laying up for yourselves treasures of prudence, of strength, of character, of wisdom? They will serve you well in the time to come—they will be riches which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal.

We wish you a satisfactory Valentine; but, with far more earnestness, a satisfactory year. Before next February arrives, may every reader of the BRITISH WORKWOMAN be a year better for the days which pass so rapidly.



PAUL'S EXECUTION.

PAUL THE AGED.

THERE is something very painful in the sight of a prison. Who has not heard of the "jolly tar," buying the eagled birds from a bird-seller on London Bridge, and letting them fly—giving them all their liberty, because in a far-off land he had himself known what it was to be eagled.

"A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive;
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for one alive."

"Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong;
Sometimes a place for rogues and thieves,
With honest men among."



If the stones could cry out of the walls, how many sad stories might be told by the walls of an old prison.

There is a portion of the Archbishop of Canterbury's palace at Lambeth which was used as a prison,

and is known as the Lollard's Tower. Those who were there incarcerated—chained to the rugged wall—were honest men, who had done no worse thing than proclaim the love and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Bonds and imprisonments" the Saviour himself foretold should be the lot of many of His servants; and so it was, not only when Rome was Pagan, but when she had named the name of Christ, and became the Papal mistress of the world.

There was an old prison at Rome, the ruins of which are still often visited, where in ancient times many of the early Christians were inured. There it is supposed that the Apostle Paul was confined, and that there he suffered a martyr's death.

How much do we know of this great Apostle! more certainly than of any of our Lord's disciples. The "Acts of the Apostles" is full of his missionary exploits; the large majority of the Epistles are his composition; he, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, more than any even of the chosen twelve, has been the teacher of the Church to the end of time. And how much in the prosecution of his labour did this eminent saint endure—there is something terrible in the record; and how welcome must have been the advent of death. He was able to say, "for me to live is Christ," and therefore able to add, "to die is gain."

Gain! look at him immured in the dungeon—long years of tribulation making him "Paul the aged" long before his time; he has known hunger and thirst and peril and weariness—he has been lashed and tortured and scorned and reviled—he has been robbed of all things—but, Christ is his! Welcome death! There is a legend told, which may or may not be true, that when Paul was about to be beheaded, his constancy disarmed the executioner. The headsman threw down the sword, and preferred to perish with the saint, rather than take the wages of sin.

Say you, what has this to do with BRITISH WORKWOMEN? Just this. Chief among those whose zeal and constancy were humanly speaking, the main stay of the Apostle—were women; as the Saviour Himself in taking that lowly step which lifts us to heavenly mansions, was attended by woman's love from the cradle to the grave, so Paul had to tell of her enduring affection and undaunted courage. Lydia, Persis, Tabitha, Priscilla, Eunice, Lois, Damaris—who can forget these women or their works? They were Christians—they advanced Christianity by their devoted and consistent lives. Surely it is not necessary to point the moral.

SONGS OF THE WORKERS.—No. 4.

AN EVENING SPENT AT HOME.

TUNE—"Auld Lang Syne."

THERE is a calm and tranquil joy

For those who needs must roam,

A joy that leaves no sting behind—

An evening spent at home.

An evening spent at home, my friends,

An evening spent at home;

Bright smiles are lit, and love grows strong,

On evenings spent at home.

We sing right well the merry song,

Until it fills the dome,

And children's prattle makes us glad

On evenings spent at home, my friends, &c.

O, some may love the noisy room,

Where "Littles" froth and foam;

But give to not the sweeter joy

Of evenings spent at home:

Of evenings spent at home, my friends, &c.

No talk with neighbours, foes, and friends,

Where noise and quarrels come,

Can bring us night—repose as sweet

As evenings spent at home:

As evenings spent at home, my friends,

Then, all who prize the joy of life,

Around no longer roam;

But bring your pleasant words and looks

To evenings spent at home,

To evenings spent at home, my friends,

For smiles are lit, and love grows strong

On evenings spent at home.

M. F.

"Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."—Proverbs xiv. 1.

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."—Psalm xxxvii. 1.

THE UNEXPECTED LEGACY;

OR,
"LIGHTLY COME, LIGHTLY GO."

CHAPTER II.

NOTWITHSTANDING JOHN'S WEAKNESS MATTERS IMPROVE A LITTLE WITH HIM AND HIS WIFE—ROSE AND ELIZA BORN—THEIR PECULIARITIES.

ROSANNA's observations and reflections were by no means pleasant to poor John, who keenly felt his wife's unkindness, although he kept silence, and sometimes perhaps was tempted to wish she had; for her perpetual repinings were cruel and hard to bear; albeit that he knew he had been in blame in leading the woman he loved into so imprudent a marriage.

Fortunately, for some years, no children came to add to their cares, and when John's father died, he left them his little stock of furniture and a small sum of money, which was a great help to them; and then it was that they determined to leave Kingsland, and settle in Winchester, in the hope of obtaining constant employment; and in Winchester it was, in middle of March, that both Rose and Eliza were born.

At first honest John found a greater difficulty in obtaining work than he expected; business was slack, and new hands were not wanted; and John's work was rough and unfinished. It might do well enough for pigsties and cattle-sheds he was told, but something neater was required for town work. At last, however, one of the chief builders receiving an extensive order, required many more hands than his usual staff, John Islewood entreated that Mr. Helder would allow him a trial, and he would do his best to give satisfaction. He was taken on for a month, and so much did he improve in the performance of his work, that Mr. Helder made no further difficulty, but kept him.

Had it not been for his periodical attacks of weakness, when he seemed unable to resist the attractions of the "Five Bells," John might have had constant employment; but although at times he would break out, and perhaps be scarcely sober for three or four nights. This led to disagreements with his master, who, himself a teetotaller, was particularly severe with any of his men who were addicted to drinking—when he would take away his work from them, and by so doing endeavour to open their eyes to their error.

Yet we could not call John Islewood a confirmed drinker, for after the folly was gone and past, he would seriously and sadly bewail his weakness and error.

Mrs. Islewood was a maudling, dissatisfied woman, who did but little towards the support of her family, and usually looked at the darkest side of everything. She was a good clear-starcher when she liked to earn a few shillings, but that was very uncertain.

In times of poverty and trial how happy is that man who possesses the inestimable treasure of a kind and loving wife, who can sympathize in all his troubles, and feel for all his hardships, who cleaves to him, with a sweet affection, both in sorrow and joy, and who can lead his heart to lean with steadfast hope and trust upon Him who alone knows what is best for His people. Such a woman is indeed a treasure beyond all price; but, alas! Rosanna was not such a one, for she would too often, by her fretful folly, only irritate the wounds a gentler hand might have healed, so that when things went a little wrong, as at times they always will, her crossness and want of tact would send poor John where many an honest hard-working man has been sent before, from the same cause, to seek oblivion and cheerful companionship at the ale-house. And however much this habit might annoy his wife, and increase her fretfulness, she had no one to blame but herself; for previous to his marriage it had been John's boast that he had never drunk a glass of beer in a public-house in his life.

Regular work and good pay soon became apparent in John Islewood's little home, and as Rosanna experienced some difficulty in finding things to feed her humour of discontent, it partially gave way before the genial warmth of an easier pocket, and in consequence her husband had less temptation to leave his house for the exciting pleasures of the beer-house. After a while their eldest-born, little Rose, came to gladden her parents' hearts, and three years afterwards Eliza added her bright little sunny face and sparkling black eyes to the family group, with whom Rose was greatly delighted, looking upon her new sister in the light of a live doll, and feeling only too proud

and happy when she was permitted to sit on the floor and hold her in her lap; till at last, as the baby grew to stand alone, she so entirely took possession of her that she used to be trusted with her by the hour.

As the children grew up it was curious to observe the marked difference in their characters. Rose at twelve years old was quite a sedate little personage, active and intelligent, of great use in helping her mother when at home, and never known to miss school of her own accord, while Eliza was the sauciest and most idle child in the school—always drawing what she called ladies and gentlemen on her slate, instead of doing her sums, trying to make herself smart with any odds she could pick up, occasioning Rose no end of trouble in getting her out of scrapes with the school-mistress, at the same time receiving much good advice which seemed to produce very little effects.

Eliza was quite spoiled, and allowed to be as idle and silly as she pleased, because her weak mother considered her a beauty, and so encouraged her secretly in all her vanity and nonsense.

As to Rose she really was the best of the family, for fortunately she was neither pretty nor attractive, but she became what was far better, an industrious, active, sensible, young woman; her heart was in the right place, she had profited largely by the instruction a National school had afforded, and her constant study was to do her best in promoting the comfort and happiness of those about her.

"I tell you what, Madam Rosey," she would say, "you think you're a woman, and want to lord it over me because you're three years older, but wait a bit and see if I don't get the upper hand yet! I'll cut you clean out, and then she would burst out laughing, and perhaps end with giving Rose a kiss, calling her a 'stupid old darling, just fit for a National-school teacher.' And Rose would laugh too, then, and play lovingly with her sister's glossy dark curls, and think 'how pretty and loving Liz did look to be sure; and after all she wasn't so very naughty.'

And so, as the two girls advanced to womanhood, each character gained strength, and the dissimilarity of their dispositions was more evident every day. There could be no doubt but that Eliza was handsome, and she knew it, not only of her own knowledge, but she was frequently told so, much too often indeed for her good, for it did but increase and foster the vanity that was her besetting sin. Often would she dance before the old looking-glass that adorned the humble chimney—albeit it was not a flatterer—and ask Rose if she wouldn't make a famous fine lady—and wish she could "paint pictures and play the music and dance at balls." And she tried hard to get to a low dancing school, that was kept near the "Five Bells," but to this her father never would consent, and was exceedingly angry with her for thinking of it. Rose, with her plain good sense, tried hard to prove to her the folly of all such fancies, and to show how much more befitting her station it would be to turn her mind to every-day duties.

"Well, I shan't then," she exclaimed one day. "I know I was born for better things, and mother says so too. What's the good of being good-looking if one has to slave one's life away in this house in Old Brook Street, and spoil oneself with dirty work. I've low— and I'll never do it—so there!"

After some difficulty, John found his way to Messrs. Shrewton's, without having been "taken up by the police, or carried home upon a shutter;" but here he found matters not so easily arranged as he had anticipated. To his astonishment, he was required to prove his identity, that he was in very truth John Islewood himself, and nobody else, that he would have to produce the certificates of the marriage of his parents, and his own birth, and that there was no other party possessing a higher claim; and thus, after a long and searching interview with Messrs. Shrewton, he found it would be indispensable that he should return home and collect the required evidence—after which he would again have to visit London. And so the poor fellow, with rather a sorrowful heart, was obliged to take his place again the same evening by the down train, where he found Rose and Eliza, who had come to meet him at the station, and to hear the news.

"No good girls," he said, "nothing come of it yet. I've got to go to King-land, where father and mother was married, for a copy of the 'titrate, and my baptism lines, and all manner, and take them all up to London, and see Mr. Shrewton again: why, I do declare, he'd hardly believe that I, be I just as though I could be anybody else; but it's just like they lawyers!"

Mrs. Islewood rather gloried in poor John's dispositions, and said she had told him so—it was exactly what she expected, and she hoped he wouldn't be such a silly as to go and throw away any more money about a trumpery advertisement.

John tried to explain matters as well as he could, but she was in no mood to be convinced; and so John rather irritated by her contradiction, was glad when it was bed time. "However, he lost no time in collecting the necessary documents; when he took a second journey to London. Messrs. Shrewton were satisfied as to the legality of his claim; and then John listened to an extract read from his brother's will, in which he left to "John Islewood, his dear brother, or in the event of his decease, to his next of kin, the sum of two hundred pounds, free of legacy duty, and a certain old book therein described."

John Islewood himself this sum of money appeared a very handsome one, but he knew that his ambitious daughter Eliza would be greatly disappointed as to the amount. As to the old book, when it was taken out of its paper coverings, and put into his hands, he turned it over very indifferently, saying he wasn't much of a scholar himself, but he supposed his womenfolk might like to read it.

It is needless to enter into further details, than that it was arranged the money should be paid into the National and Provincial Bank of England, to the credit of John Islewood; and so, with the old book under his arm, he returned once more to Winchester to "the bosom of his family."

Mrs. Islewood, with some few jerkings and tossings the head, was fain at last to acknowledge the money was an agreeable surprise. Eliza made herself both disagreeable and ridiculous, by tucking up her nose, and declaring it was a "pultry sum to what she had, of course, expected after such a fuss; but there, 'twas better than nothing, and they could get away out of such a hole of a place as they had been pent up in all their lives to Brook Street.' She laughed into, and after glancing at a few pages flung it into Rose's lap, who was sitting quietly in a corner waiting till the others should have done with it. Then she carefully examined it, and found that it was apparently a very ancient and curious manuscript, written in a quaint and difficult hand. It seemed to be a collection of texts from Scripture—pithy verbs, and ancient rules, for a good and pious life; and on the title-page was inscribed the following words:

"I, George Abel Islewood do give and bequeath this ancient volume, with all its valuable contents, to him or her of my next of kin who shall have the sense and patience first to read it all through."

"Do listen to this," said Rose, reading it aloud. "What a droll man our uncle must have been; it is very hard to make out the writing—but who will be the first to try?"

"Oh, not I, that's very certain!" cried Eliza; "it's about the last thing I should bother my brains with—the frosty old rubbush!"

"I can't make out a word of the crammed, crooked, writing," said Mrs. Islewood; "and I am not going to waste my time to try, not I."

"Well, father, what do you say?"

"Oh, no, Rosey, its just about high Dutch to me, lass; I don't think anybody will ever bother through all that there." They each took the book up again, and turned it about and looked into it, and then John gave it back to Rose, who seemed far from despising the legacy, and told her she was welcome to keep the old trash all to herself, as nobody else wanted it. So Rose took possession of that portion of the legacy so greatly despised by the rest of her family, and felt quite sorry that it should have been treated so disrespectfully, if only for the sake of the relative by whom it had been valued. She therefore carried it up into the little chamber occupied by herself and her sister, and wrapping it in a clean handkerchief, put it away for the present in a drawer.

As to the money bequeathed to his "next of kin" by George Abel Islewood, it became unfortunately a source of much bickering and discontent with poor John and his wife as well as Eliza. The latter was always driving at a change of residence, where as she said, they might look up a bit and not go on grovelling in such a hole as their present "ord, little, ugly 'ouse," and she insisted upon it, that if she could only get to learn to "paint pictures and play upon the music," it would be just the making of her. She knew, she should be a lady some day; that she always did say and always should say."

Her mother upheld her folly, and grumbled much because John would not go and draw out money to be spent in such ridiculous nonsense.

THE GRACE OF CHARITY.

THE subject of our illustration is one which cannot fail to appeal to the heart as well as to the eye. It is the personified figure of Christian Charity, taking helpless little ones to her bosom. Whenever poets or painters have represented the best feelings of the heart, they have shewn them to us in the form of a woman. It is the attribute of woman to love, and to show by gentleness, meekness, and mercy, how great is her love. Look at this picture; study it; and ask yourself—is there any of the true spirit of this Charity in me?

The ancient Greeks and Romans had their three graces—ideal beings of surpassing beauty, whose business it was to enlighten, refine, and adorn the house of man. The Christian Church has its three Graces also—no mythological personages, but plain practical principles—better calculated to make home happy than ever were the united labours of the fabled three. These Christian Graces are FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY. Faith in the unseen—in the Fatherhood of God; in the birth, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us and for our salvation—Faith in all that the Bible reveals. And Hope, “a good Hope through Grace,” a “hope which maketh not ashamed”—hope that gives light in the darkness—hope that gives life to the dead—hope that gives wings to the spirit of heaviness—paints garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness—paints a rainbow on the cloud, and shows us Heaven as our Home. Very consoling—very comforting, very strengthening, are Faith and Hope. But, of the three graces Charity is said to be the greatest. Why? The thirteenth chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians gives the answer. Charity contains within itself the other two graces—we believe only when we hope; we hope only for that which we love.

And the charity of which the Apostle speaks is not the mere giving of a beggar's dole; it is a principle of holy love, of which they who give largely of their abundance may be altogether destitute. It is a charity which “suffereth long,” forbearing, benevolent, free from jealousy and envy—attractive in its demeanour, self-denying in its spirit; withholding the force of provocation, unwilling even to imagine, much less to impute, an evil motive, weeping over sin; rejoicing in the triumph of the truth; patiently bearing adversity, wrong, and suffering; unsuspicious of evil—and even where evil is detected, more induced to weep and to encourage to better things than to frown and censure.

The human heart, when unhardened by sin, is easily touched. But the susceptible heart which feels for the misery of another, and dictates the giving of assistance, may after all be very far from a charitable heart. Almsgiving is sometimes ostentatious; sometimes purely selfish—sometimes there is real kind of sentiment. But there is a good and holy kind of giving—the true charity—which offers the cup of cold water in God's name, and for Christ's sake—that recognises responsibility with regard to those who help—both as brethren and as God's stewards.

Paganism, Infidelity, Rationalism, know nothing of true charity. It has its spring in the religion of the Jesus Christ—flows from Him—who came into the world, not to be ministered to, but to minister—an errand of mercy—a mission of charity, which the unassisted human intellect can never understand.

Christian Charity has planted her hand with Hospitals, Almshouses, Schools, Refuges, Homes for the homeless. It cares for all who need, and walks about healing, in the spirit of the Divine Master. It receives outcast children, takes them in its arms and blesses them; it offers instruction to the ignorant, and to those who are out of the way; it feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, ministers to the sick, consoles the sorrowing, comforts the afflicted, points the dying to the risen Saviour—the life-giver—and dries the tears of the mourner with the comforting words of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Let us then, in our several ways, give heed to the admonition of the Apostle, and “Follow after charity.” You may be unable to give help in money, in food, clothing, shelter, but you can give a cheering word—charity may flourish without almsgiving. But if we have it, let us give—it, give, and give freely, and in giving give to the Great Giver; for “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.”

“It is our purpose, from time to time, to introduce to the attention of our readers an account of some of the benevolent institutions of the country, especially those intended for the protection and care of women and children—the plan, practical evidence of the wide-spread spirit of evangelical charity.

HOURS OF LABOUR.

It is the honest boast of Englishmen and Englishwomen that they are free agents. Slavery—in its real sense—is unknown within our borders. We cannot for a moment conceive the idea, English workers compelled to labour, driven to it by need or factories by ruthless overseers, who flog and flog on the least sign of indolence or insubordination! With all the talk of “the Slave of the day,” it is well to get at the real state of things, as there can be no doubt that Blue Books and Newspaper leaders—useful as both are in ventilating the question—have either exaggerated or understated the facts.

With regard to children only—and, in our opinion, with regard to children only—legislative interference is tolerable. Even then it clashes with parental authority; it may be, much abused, but still in its origin divine. If a mother “leads her child into a factory, or other place of business, where she is to work, the hours are long, the work hard, and the overseers severe; where an exhausted little labourer may be kept at dreary toil, the fatigue of the stick; without in the least encroaching on the owner of the factory, the heaviest blame rests on the parent. The parent may have no other alternative between allowing his child to labor and letting him starve. Parochial relief will not meet him half-way, and therefore he willingly enough consents to any scheme whereby his child may earn bread without being sacrificed to the Moloch of competition.

But this vested right of parents is confined to parents. Our social state, our national institutions are not paternal. We are free to do as we please so long as we do no wrong to others—and the wrong to be recognised, must be direct. That is to say, let us say at the beginning, in a parson, or as a clergyman, or minister, with as long as laboriously, as consecutively as he will. The idea of an Act of Parliament which should prevent the man doing so, is simply absurd. The man is a free agent, and must consult his own inclination or necessities. And it is just so with regard to all forms of industry. Whatever be the nature of our work, whatever the condition of our labour market, the fact still remains, we are at liberty to do as we please.

Theoretically this is all true.

“Britons never will be slaves.”

But, in how many instances is it difficult—say, next to impossible, to reduce this theory to practice. Here, let us say, are a thousand young needfuls, who are not that class for illustration; they are all seeking employment. Five hundred are taken, and the other ninety-five hundred are chosen, and the other ninety turned away. The wages are light, the work is heavy. The rooms are ill-ventilated, and it is no unusual thing for the workers to faint. They have no proper time for refreshment, rest, or recreation. But they are not slaves. They can resign—their places are immediately filled—they fall into want, sickness, or evil habits—they form items in the bill of mortality—the Registrar General is ready to enter their names whenever they voluntarily or involuntarily are finally emancipated.

Now the question is, What is to be done with workers such as these? They are not slaves, but *needfuls* of a hard task master. The men who employ them are not *greedy*—grinding their bones to make them bread—they are in their position compelled by the *taskmaster*. Necessity to get through a given amount of work in a given time; they are hard pressed, over taxed, sorely tried—enough—quite enough, have they to blunt their finer feelings and to make them careless and indifferent. But, to their credit be it spoken—there are many of them more anxious to benefit those they employ—more desirous of establishing a kindly feeling between employer and employee, than writers, with more gall in their ink than is at all necessary to make it mark, are willing to believe.

The matter, plainly, is one only to be fairly righted by those whom it may concern—the Blue Books, the issues even from the Parliamentary Office, the all the debates even held within Parliamentary Walls, cannot settle a question between Capital and Labour, so well as Labour and Capital can settle it for themselves. And it is a pleasant thing to know that this is being done. A writer in the *Daily Telegraph* justly remarks:—

“In very few of the great houses of the West-end are the more aggravated features of white slavery now to be found. Many of the wealthiest and most commercially-known employers of female labour vie with each other in providing spacious workrooms, well warmed in winter, and well ventilated in summer; in assuring to their employees abundant and substantial meals, and adequate time wherein to eat them; in watching over their moral welfare, and doing all that is possible to make the human creature; in paying them a fair day's wages for a fair day's work—if any wages can be fair when a market is overstocked and woman's handicraft a drug in it; and, finally, in liberating them from the treadmill of needle-and-thread as often and as early as ever can. There may be a few millinary and dressmaking establishments where a LEGEE—male or female, native or foreign—

still plies the cowhide, and slave-driving is accounted an indispensable accessory of fashionable commerce; but as a rule we hold that the Ogre class of employers is dying out, that the sweating system is only carried on in holes and corners, and that fear of exposure in the press is the most valuable safeguard of the work-woman from the rapacity and the cruelty of a hard-hearted master or mistress.”

We may here make but brief mention of the firm of Messrs. Smith and Edges, Mr. Macintosh, representing the well-known firm, says the hours, even in the busiest season, are from eight a.m. to eight p.m.; one hour is allowed for dinner, and half-an-hour for tea. The labour is performed in spacious, well-lighted rooms; nearly all the workers are here boarded and lodged in the house—each person being provided with a separate bed. Throughout the establishment there is considerable care for the comfort and well-being of those employed, and this is exactly as it should be.

It will give us great pleasure to draw particular attention to those firms where arrangements of a similar nature have been introduced. We believe that there are many such in London, where were the “busy bees” are perpetually at work in the house. If our friends, etc., workers or employers, will be good enough to give us in what information they can on this matter, it will meet with careful and immediate attention. We feel the subject to be one of immense importance to British Workwomen—a subject not to be lightly disposed of, but one which demands serious thought, and close investigation. All who can help us in this work will have our best thanks, and better, the reward of a good conscience for having lent a helping hand to a good cause.

Sweet Baby, Angel.

“I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”—Matthew xxvii. 10.

“Angels in heaven” how still we grow! We, who, all human, cannot yet know What is an angel; thinking of this: All that we loved in her; every grace Love in her peaceful nature could trace, Was but a seed, now ripened in bliss.

Sweet, baby Angel, tender and wise, Can you look earthwards now from the skies? You that are saved from evil to come; Can you look down with heavenly eyes?— Guide us and guard us?—silence replies,— Dull are our ears, or heaven is dumb.

Only we know 'tis well with the child; Peace hath she now, and joy undefined; Knowledge unharassed, love without pain, But unto us she can never return, Yet we who so sadly after her yearn, Shall in His glory see her again.

SADIE.

SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC VALUE OF THE WORKING CLASS EXHIBITIONS.—The Earl of Shaftesbury, when recently presenting, at Exeter Hall, the prizes awarded to the successful exhibitors, in the following terms bore testimony to their domestic influence:—

“The object of such exhibitions is social rather than financial, and moral rather than commercial, for it was to hold a healthy, jolly, and noble recreation to the working classes, to break and embellish the monotony of toil—to give a free safety-valve to genius and taste, and to that which, if not highly indulged, would be hurtfully indulged, namely, the power of the imagination. Exhibitions like that which they were celebrating would develop such powers, and show that the working classes were capable of succeeding in everything which could dignify human nature. There was another object, one especially after his own heart, namely, to do everything by these means which could in the least degree improve the condition of social life, give dignity to domestic life, and throw over home all the alluvium of squalor, to make working men to give up the habits by which so many were degraded, and improve them, by the cultivation of their genius and the exercise of the affections, to make the family-hearth happy and respected. The exhibitions already held had produced great moral good, which would be immensely increased as their influence extended.”

NURSTING.—“Take this child and nurse it for ME, and I will give the thy wages,” is the inscription which God's hand writes on every cradle. “When I dressed my child each morning I prayed that Jesus would clothe it with purity,” said a godly mother to one who inquired her secret of good training. “When I wash it, I pray that His blood will cleanse its young soul from evil; when I feed it, I pray that its heart may be nourished with truth, and may grow into likeness with the youthful Jesus of Nazareth.”

**"MINNIE'S
THREE VALENTINE-DAYS."**

"I don't care if I never see your face any more."
"Very well, you have before told me so; you shall not have the opportunity again."

And the speaker took up his hat, which he had laid down on a small side-table, and rushed out of the room where this lovers' quarrel had just taken place.

That room was one occupied by Minnie Foster, a young orphan work-girl, who lived with an old aunt, and who, for the past twelvemonth, had been engaged to William Jasper, a clerk in a city merchant's house of business. These young people were frugal and temperate in their habits, industrious in their respective vocations; and, therefore, there was a fair prospect of happiness before them; but, latterly, William fauiced that he had detected symptoms of indifference in his betrothed, and, as a natural consequence of his suspicions, he became irritable, and was inclined to take offence even at trifles; bickerings fatal even to true love, had repeatedly occurred between them, but on the present occasion an unresumed and decided quarrel had taken place, and as Minnie, on the departure of her angry lover, burst into a fit of tears, a recollection arose, which still more keenly aggravated her wounded feelings—it was Valentine's-day, the anniversary of the one on which William had declared his love to the pretty young workwoman, whom he had long secretly admired, and whose heart he had determined to win in spite of many rivals. And notwithstanding the fervent admiration of the head man at the warehouse for which Minnie worked, and the tempting proposals of Mr. Spice, the bachelor grocer, who lived opposite to Minnie, and who had just set up for himself, the young girl accepted the addresses of the smart city clerk, and believed she could love him just as truly as a good woman should love the man whom she solemnly promises to honour and obey. And for some months she thought herself truly happy; but, alas, for poor human nature, Minnie, in spite of her many valuable qualities of mind and heart, had one besetting fault, and I grieve to say it was that foible which characterizes so many of her sex, especially those in Minnie Foster's humble sphere. I mean an undue love for dress. Now, it is very true that social obligations compel every woman to pay some attention to her outward appearance, and it is quite right that it should be so, it seems to be a natural instinct implanted for wise and good reasons in women's breasts; and indulged in due moderation, it leads to the cultivation of those minor virtues, neatness and order; everyone respects a neatly-stripped scrupulously cleanly woman, whilst most people are repelled by a slattern, who neither combs her hair nor mends or washes her clothes. But when this necessary social virtue exaggerates itself into an undue love of finery and over-dress, when precious time is frittered away in arranging bands and ringlets, when the set of a ribbon is a more precious thing to its wearer than the cultivation of her heart and mind, or the care and culture of her immortal soul, then her womanly virtue becomes diseased, and the feminine love of dress and ornament too frequently pulls its wearer down to depths undreamt of by the girl, when she first indulges in the habit of admiring her own features and attractions in the looking-glass. An undue regard for dress, then, was Minnie's prevailing fault; frugal as I have said, to a degree, as regarded her appetite, she would yet not scruple to forego even necessary meals to gratify her desire for a new dress, or a smart bonnet. When some months of courtship had cooled down William Jasper's enthusiastic admiration—for lovers can subside into reason sometimes as well as husbands, especially where the courtship is of any duration—he began to discern this failing of Minnie's, and, frequently, as she chose to term it, lectured her on the subject. But he might have spared his breath; Minnie loved to linger during their evening walks, before the windows of some of these splendid drapery establishments, which render the streets of London radiant as with so many parades. Thither she would draw her unwilling suitor, and stand, longing for impossible silks, sumptuous velvet mantles, or bonnets, the price of which doubled her week's earnings. In vain, William, with the flattery so natural and commendable in love, told her that she was much dearer to him in her homely lincey, which had cost but tenpence the yard, than she could have been decked out in rich costume, ill befitting her station. She sneered at dress distinctions, and told him if she could afford it, she would dress like a duchess.

"Then you had better look out for a Duke," William said, on one occasion, when she had uttered this sentiment. "I am sure you would not be fit for a poor man's wife, dressed in that brocaded silk, and that velvet cloak," which articles Minnie had set her longing eyes on, declaring that she must have them "by hook or by crook." This produced a wrangle; Minnie resented what she considered a threat, and William taunted her with regretting that she had chosen a poor clerk, with only thirty shillings a week of income. And now, on this very Valentine's-day, a quarrel had again arisen—Minnie herself scarcely knew how or why—which threatened to the betrothed lovers altogether. Minnie was engaged in manufacturing a very stylish bonnet, when William came with a valentine in his hand, which he preferred bringing himself to sending through the ordinary channel of valentines—the post. What he had made the offering of gilt and silvered embossed paper, with its pretty illustrations of roses, clouds, and sleeping maidens, William turned round "brusly" and asked what Minnie was making "the thing" for. One word brought up another, as it does in most quarrels. He reproached her with extravagance in dress, and she retorted on him by asking why he wasted his money in foolish paper—pushing away the valentine contemptuously. Fiercer and fiercer the altercation grew; Minnie's temper at all times high, got fairly the better of her—she tore the gaily decorated valentine into pieces, and threw them in her lover's face. Lover! who would suppose that the enraged man, who, upbraided and retorted, could have ever been Minnie's submissive adoring lover. Yet it was so, and the pair, trembling with passion, hurling all kinds of bitter speeches at each other, taunting, threatening, and defying, loved each other even at that minute, with a tenderness that defies description. But, nevertheless, the words had been spoken, recorded at the head of this chapter, and the plight pair were separated.

From tears Minnie fell into meditation—dangerous, terrible meditation. But a few days previously, the tempest had cast himself into her path, as, of course, at some time or other, the road of every human life. A rich idle lad had seen Minnie going to and from her warehous, and had repeatedly spoken to her, having every facility afforded him for so doing, by Minnie's predominant passion for staring into shop windows. She had listened to him at first with indignation, and a secret wish to punish him for his presumption; but he threw out tempting lures of abundance of fine dresses, shawls and bonnets, a luxurious house to live in, and even hinted that a carriage was not impossible. A carriage! True, shame must be the coachman, and destruction the horses attached to this splendid vehicle, but Minnie had listened, and it is wise, oh daughters of Eve! to fly the serpent, rather than listen to him. Minnie had given no answer, she had said to herself there was no harm in listening; but those words had influenced her in this quarrel with the man, whom alone in the world had her heart and her affections; and now it was on these words she thought, and the desperate idea seized her, how easy it was to revenge herself on Mr. William Jasper, to ent his heart to its inmost core, and, by destroying herself, ensure his destruction. She knew, oh yes, well she knew, he would not survive her elevation, and—said that low still voice of God which we call conscience—her downfall. She thought and wept, and thought again, till the reaction of her unusual excitement, and her convulsive weeping, made her feel drowsy. Presently she was nearly asleep.

"I won't give way to this," she thought. "I will rouse and go out to meet—yes, him." She did not even know the name of the tempter, though her natural discrimination told her that he was what society calls a gentleman—that is, he was a selfish, reckless libertine, who studied only himself and the gratification of his own vices, but who had acquired that outward polish, and elegance of appearance, which is very far from testifying inward worth.

Minnie rose, washed away her tears, smoothed her bright chestnut hair, dressed herself in her best, and went forth.

The humble, but neatly-kept lodging was abandoned soon after that. The old relative with whom she resided shook her head, when questioned about her, and said she knew nothing.

* * * * *

And now Minnie revelled in all the forbidden luxuries she had so earnestly desired. She had dresses of silk, satin, my even velvet, and costly manufactured fabrics fit for the wear of a queen, yet

these failed to bring all the happiness she had believed must arise from their possession. There were many times when she felt that the treasure of one true and loving heart was worth all the jewels with which her temper so freely adorned her. Servants waited on her, compelled to obey her least whim; yet she had a secret feeling that they despised and ridiculed her the moment they quitted her presence. Luxurious meals sated her appetite; rich wines heated her blood; but she had no longer the zest with which she had formerly sat down to the simple meal, earned by hard and honest labour. Ah! young girls, vice entails its own punishment, even while its votaries are luxuriating in its pleasures.

Months passed thus, and Minnie fancied all her future years would be spent in luxury, if, indeed, she glanced at the future at all. Sin has this peculiarity: they who live in it, must live in the present only, they *there* not look back on the past, and at the future they must, if they reflect at all, shudder. While living in fancied security, the blow came to Minnie Foster all at once—her betrayer grew tired of her. To the libertine his life is scarcely of as much account as a child's toy, which ceases to attract the moment the novelty is over. She received a letter one day from this *gentleman*, as he was styled by himself and his friends. It informed her that he was immediately going abroad, and that their acquaintance must terminate—his agent, he added, had his orders to dispose of the furniture and let the house, meanwhile he wished her well, and enclosed her a ten-pound note. Minnie wept and raved; she had had little notion of the slight tics arising from vice, but she soon found matters were imperatively carried out. In a word, she was thrown on the world with but few resources; these consisted of her clothes and jewels, which she disposed of to a great disadvantage. To one of her enervated habits and extravagant ideas, this money lasted but a short time. Then she was cast forth from her lodgings, destitute. She was still dressed in the remnants of her former finery. Work she was now unfitted for; there remained only a still deeper and more revolting depth of sin, and from this her very soul receded. Minnie had been tempted and had fallen, but she was not innately depraved. As she wandered in the dim twilight of a chill February evening, over those arches which have been too truly named the "Bridge of Sighs," she recouled with a shudder as she called to mind the date, it was the fourteenth—Valentine's-day. How memorable had this anniversary been. First, it had brought to her happy and honest affection; the next time this day reurned, she had flung love, and faith to the winds, had bowed before the altar of vanity and vice, and declared herself its priestess. Now it brought destruction and—yes, the word must be pronounced—death!

"Better death than further shame," said the wretched girl, who, with the fatal error of those who want faith in the tender care of a Father, who forgives and pities the erring, believed she had no alternative. She rose from the stone seat on which she had rested, and with one look up to the black and cheerless sky, she climbed to the parapet and stood for a second, scarcely conscious of her actions. It was but for a second, in another there was a leap—confounding sense and motion—and she was struggling with the black waters, vainly repentant, and eager for the chance of renewed life. But there was no hope—no help at hand. Vainly she fought with the dark tide, it overwhelmed her feeble arms—all was over.

* * * * *

The water was splashing on her face, when her eyes again opened, but as she gasped for breath her senses slowly returned, and she perceived that the cold drops proceeded from the hand of her old aunt, who, with a face of considerable alarm, was dashing water on her from a basin containing that element. A figure—it was a man's—knelt at her feet, and was chafing her hands, cold as ice, from she believed, her immersion. But behold, to her amazement—he was dressed in her old linsey frock, that frock belonging to old times, and it was dry. Could it be?—impossible—and yet this was—oh, joy!—William, William Jasper, himself, who rubbed warmth into her hands, and called her his dear, his darling Minnie. Was it?—could it be? Yes! it was a dream, only a dream—a terrible, shocking, dreadful dream, but yet nothing but a dream—and she was not a vile creature, she had not really sinned, and—she started up, and fell on her knees, clasping her hands above her head in fervent ecstasy. "Thank God! thank God!" Never was thanksgiving more earnest. The next moment she was up, and her arms were clasped round William's

THE BRITISH WORKWOMAN.

neck—greatly to his amazement, but much to his satisfaction.

"Oh! dear, dear William, I am so glad—so sorry, I mean; will you forgive me? and I'll never wear anything but this dear old linsey all my life. I'll never look at the shops any more, and I'll make my old straw bonnet last me for six months to come."

"Why, Minnie," said her aunt, laughing, "you've given us a famous fright; I thought you were in a fit, and I was just going for a doctor, when William came rushing in, and found you on the old sofa, raving and struggling like something mad. He told me to get some cold water, and began rubbing your hands. I'm glad you're better," said the old lady; "but you have given us a rare fright, and that's the truth!"

Then Minnie, half laughing, half sobbing, told her dream. And silently her listeners and herself drew its moral. Visions, as in the old, old times, are still sent by Providence to human creatures as warnings; if we would but accept them. In this case the warning was accepted. The lovers were reconciled, and the next Valentine's-day saw Minnie Foster, a happy wife and mother. But she never forgot the anniversary of St. Valentine, and in later times, when her hair was grey, and her light footstep somewhat heavier, she delighted in nothing so much as telling her girls the history of her "Three Valentine Days."

A. J.

ON PROPRIETY.—Sisters! Have you ever read (or thought) that Propriety is to woman what the great Roman critic says action is to an orator—it is the first, the second, the third requisite. A woman may be knowing, active, witty, and amusing, but without Propriety she is not可爱. Propriety is the centre in all the lines of duty and agreeableness meet. It is to characterize what proportion is to figure, and grace to attitude. It does not depend on any one perfection, but it is the result of general excellence. It shows itself by a regular, orderly, undeviating course, and never starts from its sober orbit, into splendid eccentricities; for it would be ashamed of such praise as it might extort, by a turning from its proper path, the which Milton delineates in his beautiful picture of correct propriety, seen in our first mother, as

"Those thousand decencies which daily flow From all her words and actions."

Fire-side Matter.

A WEEK IN THE COUNTRY WITH BELLA SELDON.—By Emily K. A pleasant, lively and attractive book for the young—childlike, without being childish; amusing, without failing to be instructive; interesting, without being tedious. The story is neatly contrived, the little incidents perfectly natural, the conversations free from that "hookish" style so frequently adopted, and the moral tone thoroughly healthy. It is a good book and deserves to be highly recommended.

THE BROOK IN THE WATERS.—This is a collection of Original Hymns and Sacred Poems, by Anna Shipton; already favourably known as the Author of "Whispers in the Dark," "Precious Gems from the Saviour's Diadem," "The Cottage on the Rock," etc. We have in a former number given a sample of this graceful and attractive collection, and it only remains for us to add, that the work throughout is executed with great taste and ability, and breathes a purely evangelical spirit. It is admirably adapted for a gift book—a birthday present.

THE GARDEN ORACLE, AND HORTICULTURAL YEAR BOOK AND ALMANACK FOR 1865.—"God Almighty," says Lord Bacon, "first planted a garden; and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirit of man." A "bit of garden," to be carefully, industriously tended is always a comfortable adjunct to the home; and those who help to instruct the amateur in the best methods of its culture do good service. Mr. Shirley Hibberd is already well known for his labours in this particular department; his "Brambles and Bay Leaves," his essay on "Things Homely and Beautiful," his "Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste," and his "Town Garden" are all familiar. The "Garden Oracle" is now an established favourite, in the seventh year of its publication, and it has lost nothing of its attractiveness and utility. Every year Mr. Hibberd finds something new to say that is worth the shilling, and not the least interesting part of the work is the well-chosen texts which figure on every page of the calendar. The Author has our best wishes for the success of his work.

MR. JOHN HARVEY'S WRITING COPIES.—[See Advertisement.]—We cordially commend these Scripture Copies, which, while perfecting the handwriting, impresses lessons on the memory which are not easily effaced.

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SEWING MACHINES.—We little thought that the replies to our inquiries would have been so numerous and conflicting, or we should have paused before making them. However, we have selected two which appear to us more comprehensive and satisfactory than most—and with which we hope our inquiring friends will be satisfied—they are given in answer to the following, which appeared in our August number:—

How long have you worked at machines?

Describe the machines you have worked upon.

Say for how long it period.

State the nature and quality of the work performed.

Value of these machines.

Also of others generally, within your knowledge and experience.

To the Editor of the "BRITISH WORKWOMAN."

SIR.—I enclose you my answer to your questions about Sewing Machines.

1st. I have had them at my business ever since they were introduced to the public.

2nd. I have had the following Machines, and have most of them now working:—The Lancashire Machine, Thomas's Machine, Singer's Machine, the Wheeler and Wilson's Machine, and Howe's Machine; and many others by different makers; but the above are best known.

The Lancashire Machine I like best for quilting, shirts, &c., and strong seaming.

Singer's Machine, Thomas's Machine, and Howe's Machine are well adapted for all kinds of tailoring, and dressmaking, and for materials of a strong and medium nature. But I prefer Singer's Machine for that work.

Howe's Machine I prefer for leather work, viz.— saddlery, harness-making, shoe-making, &c.

Thomas's Machine is well adapted for most purposes that Singer's is suited for, and in some cases, the long, thin arm of Thomas's Machine allows it to be used where the others could not be; for instance, round sleeve, &c. Thomas's is a much quicker Machine, and I like the work better. I do not think that Singer's Machine gets out of repair so soon as Thomas's Machine; in fact, I know from experience that Singer's Machine wears longer and can be repaired much easier than Thomas's Machine.

Wheeler and Wilson's Machine is, in my opinion, the best for household use. It sews light materials, such as shirts, sheets, handkerchiefs, and all fine cotton or linen goods, better than any I have seen. For heavy goods, such as woollens, &c., I do not think it does at all well.

The parties from whom the Machine is bought should teach the purchaser to take it to pieces, for the purpose of cleaning, or to do any little repair; in fact, teach how to work it.

Yours, &c., a Reader and Machine user.

To the Editor of the "BRITISH WORKWOMAN."

SIR.—I am aware that with the variety of machines advertised, and the variety of prices named, and all claiming the superiority—that a person in visiting, perhaps, her all in this life-long—machine, will, without the help of experience, feel timid in choosing. I have, therefore, ventured to state my experience, as a fellow-workwoman, for the guidance of those who may trust me.

I have been employed for the last four years on sewing machines, during which time I have worked upon almost every material excepting leather. I have used the Johnson Machine, Thomas's, Singer's, Howe's, and Wheeler and Wilson's, and Wilcox and Gibbs's, and, finally, the Wanzer. The Johnson I found of little use. The Thomas was too heavy for a female, or too oily for good work. The Singer I liked, but it was only for a small variety of work. The Wheeler and Wilson was so complicated, that I occupied all the time in attending to it. The Wilcox and Gibbs was very simple, but the chain-stitch was objectionable. My attention was then drawn to the new machine, brought out some time before, called the "Wanzer." I received it the 14th of July; and, although I have worked on a great variety of material, such as flannel, shirts, clothes, dress-making, and baby linen, I have not had the least trouble: it is so simple that I was able to teach a friend of mine, an upholsterer, how to work to one she had bought, in about an hour. I speak with confidence, and trust my advice will be the means of bringing peace and happiness to many a poor hard-worked girl.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The present position, and early reception into favour, of the "BARRISS WORKWOMAN" is still very encouraging. We cannot afford space for the mass of commendations we are daily receiving—not only from the press, but also by letter from ministers of the gospel of all denominations, and also from private individuals; whose warm and generous approval can only tend to stimulate us to still greater exertion.

Mr. Gurney is respectfully thanked for the kind expression of her approval of "THE BRITISH WORKWOMAN." The subject she refers to was quite an oversight; there is no disposition on our part to adopt the principle she condemns.

The commencement of a New Year will doubtless suggest itself as a good opportunity for fresh subscriptions. We hope and trust our kind friends will do all they can in their respective neighbourhoods, and among their connexions, for the "BRITISH WORKWOMAN," and we can helpfully believe that the "BARRISS WORKWOMAN" will find a ready and valuable market OUT AND AT HOME.

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